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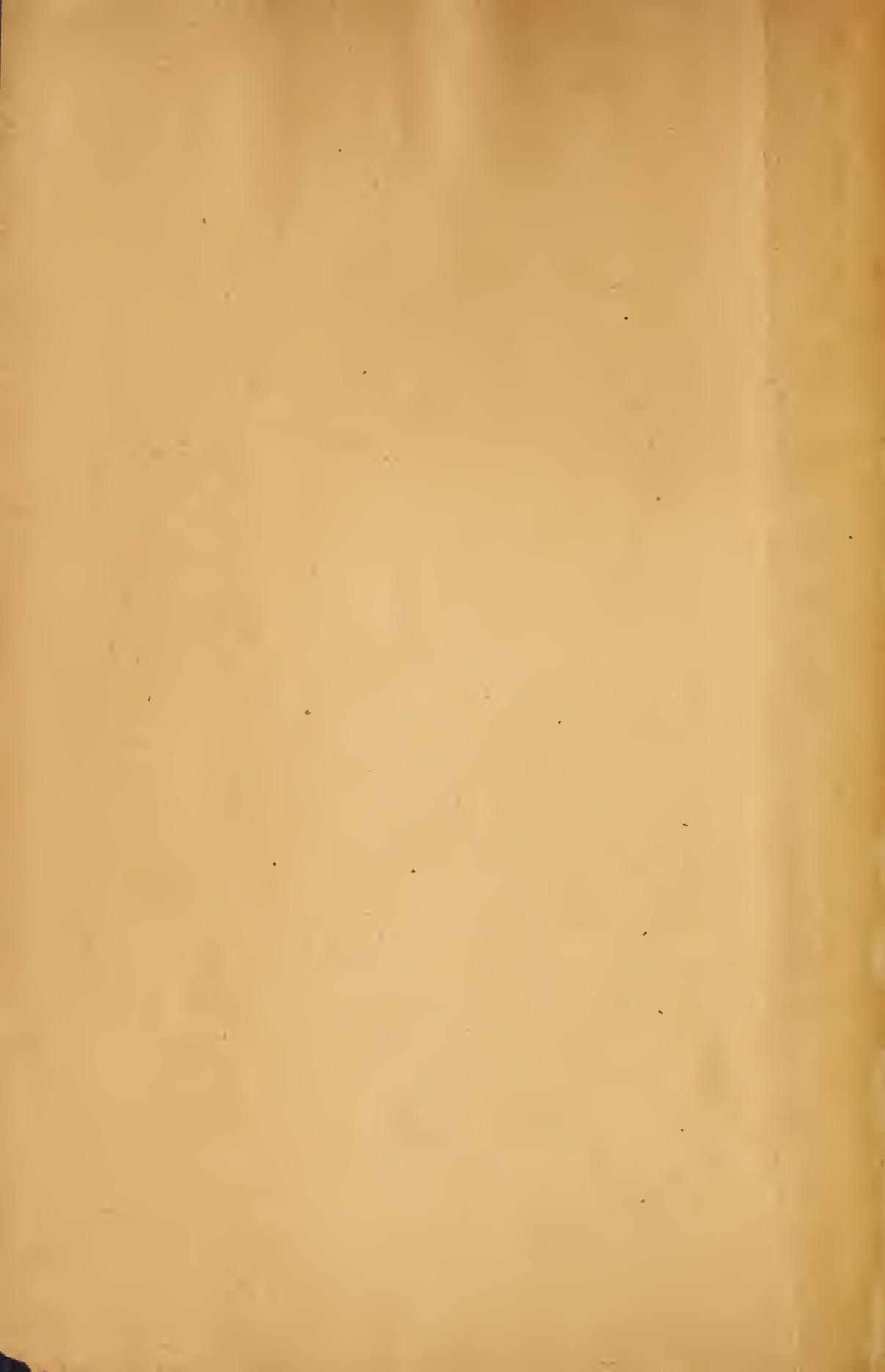
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The Hymns of the Highlands,  
By NEIL MAC NEILL, Esq.

From  
The Catholic Presbyterian  
Sept 1882





THE  
**CATHOLIC PRESBYTERIAN.**

No. XLV.—SEPTEMBER, 1882.

*Neil MacNeil*

**THE HYMNS OF THE HIGHLANDS.**

IT is within the last hundred years that the Highlands of Scotland have become anything more than a mere name to outsiders. Since then, poets, novelists, and artists have repaired to those untrdden fields on isle and mainland for fresh scenes and original characters ; while the tourist has found a scenery that charms the eye, and the sportsman a grand and varied field for sport. To the Christian the religious history of the people of that part of the empire is a subject of greater interest ; for among the Celto-Norse inhabitants of the Highlands, in earlier as in later days, were reared not a few of those whose names shed lustre on our religious history. From Patrick and Columba to Duff and Macleod, the religious and enthusiastic nature of the Celt has helped to create fervour and life in many spheres of Christian activity.

A good deal has been said and written recently of the general literature of the Gael, which mainly consists of poetry. But hitherto little attention has been bestowed on his religious poetry, to the influence of which much of the spiritual life of the people at present is due. Highland poetry represents very adequately the land, the soil, and the race from whence it sprang. We see this especially in its almost total want of humour, of wit, and of satire. The exceptions to this are so few that they confirm the rule. In reading Celtic poetry one feels the air of intense realism ; the soul is fascinated by its grim and gloomy grandeur. The Highlander had little acquaintance for ages with any literature beyond his own, nor did he come in contact with many men or many races. His heart was always concerned with the ever-present, solemn struggle of life—its severe actualities, always so patent in a poor and barren country. There was little in his life

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that could be regarded as cheerful. He and his people from age to age moved on under the equipment of arms, beneath a bannered front on which hostile forces perpetually hovered. On the south-east they were rarely at peace with their own Lowland countrymen, except when some great crisis drew the people into a united army to oppose the hereditary foe of Scottish independence. Among themselves the bloody rivalries of chiefs and clans were fatal to intellectual calm and culture; and only the severer virtues of the Christian life could take root and flourish. The mountains in their majestic solitudes were not favourable to the development of humour and the artistic faculty. The followers of Donald Balloch, when their gory exercise at Harlaw was over, could not be expected to sit down cheerfully to enjoy an aesthetic entertainment of the modern kind. The great and melancholy mountains were always before their eyes. He who dwelt by the base of Cruachan could scarcely lift up his eyes without seeing the majestic Nevis; and north of Nevis the broad-shouldered Wyvis was seen from afar peering over its mighty fellows. Minds accustomed to such sublime visions and attractions frequently become regardless of the forms and settings of minor things. Mountains present rather a grandeur and a heaviness to the human heart, as is well illustrated in the sombre annals of the ancient Hebrew. They confront us with a reign of law, stern and impassive. The merry sunbeams cannot elicit from them a smile; their crests, like stern sentinels, couch before the familiar gaze of the people; their bosoms protract the thunders, retain the echoes; and the lightnings flash harmless on their adamantine brows. Again, the thoughts of the inhabitants of the islands are moulded, not only by the perpetual snow, the mist, and the shadows of the great mountains, but by the deep-breasted ocean, with its many mysteries of sound, life, and movement. So the stern gloom of the Celtic nature was fostered by the deeper sternness of the external world around. There is not much playfulness in the poetry of the Gael. There is directness of vision, there is the intense mystical charm of nature; but it is deficient in that quality of comprehensiveness where all the features of poetry present themselves. The people moved under an oppressive sense of the supernatural; they lived ever within the fear and the presence of the unseen and the mysterious. Of them it might be said that they "endured as seeing Him who is invisible." Their poetry was what all genuine poetry is—an entrance into the wisdom and spirit of the universe—an insight into the life and truth of things.

To these Celts living in their lonely glens, wrapt in the wind-tossed wreaths of cloud and mist hanging from the bare brows of mountains, the doctrines of Christianity came home with peculiar force. Its life-giving faith charmed by its simplicity. The people, many of them fishermen, found their own life-struggles and heart-anxieties interpreted in the simple lives of the early Christians—those brave-hearted fishermen in the land of Israel, who became instrumental in laying the

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foundation-stones of our Christian civilisation. The Celt, perhaps because of his impatience of logical processes, and his general unreadiness or inability to climb to the heights of great arguments, takes up Christianity in a somewhat intuitive fashion—he somehow instinctively discerns its divine origin, power, and sanction. He never has much difficulty in accepting and retaining the most uninviting dogmas. His emotional, poetic nature delights, yea, revels in the sterner and gloomier doctrines of the Calvinistic system of theology. To him it is no intellectual hardship to accept unreservedly the less popular parts of that system. In mind and heart he yields a ready unquestioning submission to the Divine sovereignty ; the problems which free-will and foreknowledge absolute suggest to pure intellect do not disturb him ; his Christian experience practically explains to him how his will becomes lost in that of the Infinite, and how he can realise perfect freedom in the service of his Maker. And in this poetic nature of his, as in the hymnology of nearly all ages and all peoples, the seeds of heretical development rarely obtain a lodgment. He is orthodox or nothing ; severely Protestant or slavishly Popish.

The religious poetry of the Highlands might be regarded as belonging to three periods—the Early, the Mediæval, and the Modern.

It was during the early period that much of the secular ballad literature that has made the name of Ossian so famous was produced. The heathenism of the Finian ages was finally discredited by Columba. The poetic dialogues, in which the struggle has been handed down to us, between Christian Patrick and heathen Ossian, are among the most interesting of these early ballads. Among the Christian productions of the period is one entitled “Patrick’s Hymn,” which forms one of the Gaelic hymns in the “*Liber Hymnorum*,” a manuscript of the eleventh century, belonging to Trinity College, Dublin. The hymn bears internal evidence of belonging to a much earlier date. The original text will be found in the work of Professor Windisch of Leipzig, “*Irische Texte mit Wörterbuch*,” as well as in the *Scottish Celtic Review*. Patrick appears to have been a true missionary of the cross of Christ—a man in whose heart there lay a mighty depth of holy ardour—whose energy and zeal were inexhaustible, judging from this hymn, which I have attempted to put in English rhyme. “*Patrice dorone innimunsa*,”—*Patrick made this hymn*—are the first words of the prose introduction to this remarkable creed prayer. It is stated that the hymn was composed in the time of Leogaire, son of Neil. The cause of its composition was alleged to be the need of “protection with his monks against the mortal enemies who were in league against the clerics.”

I bind myself to-day—  
To the power of the Trinity ;  
To belief in the all-gracious Three ;  
To confession that the Three are One,  
In the Maker of the world and sun.

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I bind myself to-day—  
 To the power of the birth of Christ ;  
 To the truth that Jesus was baptised ;  
 To the fact that path of death He trod ;  
 That three days He lay beneath the sod ;  
 To the power of Resurrection morn ;  
 That from the earth to heaven He was borne ;  
 To the power of His judgment-call,  
 When a final state shall be assigned to all.

I bind myself to-day—  
 To the power of the cherubs high :  
 In obedience of the angels nigh ;  
 In attendance of archangels' might ;  
 In the hope of resurrection's light ;  
 In the prayers of the sires of eld ;  
 In the visions that the seers beheld ;  
 In the precepts the apostles taught ;  
 In the faith in which confessors wrought ;  
 In the innocence of virgins pure ;  
 In the deeds of just men that endure.

I bind myself to-day—  
 To the power of Heaven ;  
 To the lustre sun-given ;  
 To the pureness snow-driven ;  
 To fiery flames brightening ;  
 To the swiftness of lightning ;  
 To the speed of the breeze ;  
 To the depth of the seas ;  
 To the firmness of land ;  
 And the rocks that there stand, &c.

This hymn was to be a corslet of faith, for soul and body, against demons, men, and vices. Devils could not stand before the faee of him who sang it ; envy and poison could do no harm ; in this life it would be a safe-guard against sudden death ; and it would be a covering of defenee (*lùireaeh*—*lorica*) after death. When Patriek sang it, the opposition of the royal Leogaire melted away like the snow on the brows of the hills before the advance of the Son of Morning.

There is something unique—rather grotesque—about this production, whieh is found nowhere else in Gaelic poetry. The use made of the elements is rather striking—something unusual in a poem intended to be devotional. We have no other relies of this early period. There are some hymns extant whieh have been attributed to Columba, but they were composed in Latin ; and so, do not properly belong to the hymns of the people. It is in Ireland that the hymn given above has been preserved ; but, like much of the literature of that period, it is in the language of the Highlands, while Patriek himself, the author, is reognised now to have been a native of the latter country.

There were several bards that composed religious poetry during the Mediæval period. First, and chief of these, was Muireadhael Albannaeh, or Murdoch of Albin. All his productions bear a deeply devotional

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character, which is rather remarkable when it is remembered how uncivilised the Highlands were then at the time in which he flourished, between A.D. 1180 and 1220. He was the ancestor of a famous line of bards and senachies who became hereditary in the Clanranald family. His compositions give evidence of considerable culture and scholarship, while they exhibit much earnestness and intensity of feeling. In them we detect the germs of that extreme subjectivity, which has characterised later Christian life in the Highlands. Muireadhach is supposed to have been an ecclesiastic, like many of those who composed in mediæval times. Some of the words in the following verses, by him, are slightly suggestive of Popish ideas :—

I praise Thee, Christ, that on Thy breast  
A guilty one like me may rest ;  
And that Thy favour I can share ;  
And on my lips Thy cross may bear.

O Jesus, sanctify my heart,  
My hands and feet and every part !  
Me sanctify in Thy good grace,—  
Blood, flesh, and bones, and all my ways.

I never cease committing sin ;  
For still its love resides within :  
May God His holy fragrance shed  
Upon my heart and on my head.

Great, glorious One, vouchsafe relief  
From all the ills that bring me grief ;  
Ere I am laid beneath the sod,  
Before me smooth my way to God.

In another poem, he recommends the sinner to make peace with “the clergy,” to “confess” himself to his “priest,” and to conceal none of his many sins, although it would be sore to tell their evil. Muireadhach was a poet of considerable vigour, while his piety appears to have been unquestionable.

Later on the ecclesiastics do not appear to have devoted much of their talents to the composition of sacred poetry. We find them, however, very diligent in the study of secular productions. Sir James Macgregor, Dean of Lismore, in conjunction with his brother, Duncan, collected previous to 1512-20 many of these together ; and his manuscript is known as the “Book of the Dean of Lismore,” first published in 1862. In the Highlands, as elsewhere before the Reformation, the corrupt lives of the clergy were notorious, of which several poems in Macgregor’s Work afford indubitable evidence. In a string of proverbial sayings by a Phelim Maedougall we have many of the popular aphorisms by which the religious world of the day were apparently guided in their thoughts and actions. Some of Phelim’s sayings are :—

Not good is a bishop without warrant ;  
Not good is a blemish on an elder ;  
Not good a priest with one eye ;  
Not good a parson if a beggar.

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Immediately before the Reformation there was not much religious light in the Highlands. The growth and development of popery had well nigh extinguished the life which the early missionaries planted. And it took nearly two centuries after the Reformation era before lost ground began to be recovered. During that time the people were nominally Protestant, but there was not much of the Gospel preached among them.

Modern religious poetry—what is still loved, read, and sung in the Highlands—begins with the eighteenth century, at a time when the first throbings of reviving spiritual life were felt among the people. In Argyllshire we come across the names of John Ban Maor, Bean a' Bharra, Macindeor, and Mackeich. But the author whose composition obtained the largest circulation and the greatest popularity was David Mackellar, a native of Cowal, whose Hymn, or rather poem, published in Glasgow about 1752, was for a long time a favourite at Christian firesides. The people appear to have highly appreciated a production in rhyme in which they found the doctrines they loved woven in an interesting manner. The Gaelic version of the Psalms was not yet circulated among them. At the same time, in the north of Scotland, the sacred muse began to kindle her holy flame. John Mackay of Farr, in Sutherland, composed a number of religious pieces ; and is supposed to have suggested to the celebrated Dugald Buchanan of Rannoch the composition of his famous “Spiritual Hymns.” Buchanan, born in Perthshire in 1716, an eloquent lay evangelist and a distinguished Celtic scholar, is one of the greatest of the Gaelic bards, and undoubtedly the greatest of our hymn-writers. His Hymns were published in 1766, and he died in 1768. They are eight in number ; and the principal of them are on such themes as *The Sufferings of Christ*, which the author treats in very tender and melting strains ; *Winter*, in which lessons are taken from the seasons ; the *Skull*, which is boldly and skilfully questioned as to the life and lot of its quondam possessor ; and the *Day of Judgment*, which, in sublimity and dramatic power, stands unrivalled in the whole field of Gaelic poetry. This last, as it was with his Cymric contemporary, Gronwy Owen, was his favourite subject. The following verses, rendered from his *Day of Judgment*, will give an idea of the manner of the poem—it is certainly more like a poem than what is generally known as a hymn, being a hundred and twenty-eight quatrains in length :—

Then, like the morn enkindling red,  
A glowing spreads throughout the skies ;  
Where Jesus comes a glare is shed  
By heaven's burning tapestries.

The clouds all suddenly unfold  
To make for the High King a door ;  
And we the Mighty Judge behold  
Whose glory streams forth evermore.

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The rainbow glows around His form ;  
 His voice resounds like mountain floods ;  
 Outflashing o'er the sullen storm,  
 His lightning eye pours from the clouds.

The sun, great lustre of the skies,  
 Before His glorious Person pales :  
 At length her failing brightness dies  
 Before the light His face unveils.

Her robes of gloom she will uptake ;  
 The blood-red moon drops down in space ;  
 The mighty heavenly powers shall shake,  
 Outcasting planets from their place.

Like tempest-shaken fruit on trees,  
 So shall they tremble in the skies ;  
 Like heavy raindrops on the breeze,  
 Their glory like a dead man's eyes.

The poetical conceptions of Buchanan have woven themselves into the theological ideas of the Highlander, like those of Milton into the religious thought of England, with which the bard of Rannoch was evidently quite familiar. While the country around him was trembling with the roar of that Rebellion which had so gory a termination on the bleak shivering moor of Culloden, Buchanan was quietly composing those holy strains, which have been more powerful factors than hosts of armed men could be in accomplishing the silent revolution of thought and life which took place last century in the Highlands. The agents, of whom he was one, of the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge, achieved far more in tranquillising the Highlands and Islands, and in extinguishing Jacobite sympathies, than the bloody battalions of Cumberland ; and it might be remarked in passing, that nothing else than a similar army of agents can outroot Fenian treason from the heart of the troublesome and much-enduring Irish Celt.

While Buchanan was tuning his sacred harp in the Central Highlands, Donald Matheson, born in the parish of Kildonan in 1719, was composing in Sutherland, in the far north. He was a small farmer who stood high in the estimation of his religious countrymen. The parish minister declared that a single poem of Matheson's produced more good in the district than all his own preaching accomplished during many years. His poetry is of a high order, but somewhat abstruse and unintelligible to the natives of other counties who are unacquainted with his provincial dialect.

At the same time, in the neighbourhood of Inverness, there flourished Lachlan MacLauchlan, the poet-preacher of Abriachan, on the north of Loch Ness. He was one of the agents of the Society already mentioned, and was the first to bring the semi-heathen smuggling inhabitants of Abriachan under the influence of the Gospel. In one of his poems he refers to the ecclesiastical troubles of the day in Scotland, and makes patronage in the Church of Scotland the supreme *fons malorum*. The

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bard looks forward hopefully to the time when the church should awake out of the grave of corruption under the stone of Patronage :

Yet when her Head the word has spoken  
The stone is raised—Death's power is broken ;  
The patron's power disappears,  
And we'll have praise instead of tears.

Two of the grandsons of the poet were ministers in 1843, and at the Disruption left the Church of Scotland.

During the latter part of the last and the beginning of the present century, two bards of great poetic gifts flourished in the neighbourhood of Inverness. They were Christian laymen—one an agent of the Society already referred to, and the other a weaver. Their names were William Mackenzie and Donald Macrae. Their poems constitute the great bulk of a volume entitled “The Sacred Poetry of the North.” The productions of the former are of a mediocre character; but the poetry of the latter evinces powers of the highest order.

Macrae combines the spiritual insight and holy sympathies of George Herbert with the tuneful subtlety of Shelley. His spiritualising faculty is exceedingly keen—his analysis and allegorical descriptions of his Christian experience being so profound and mystical, that ordinary simple Christian minds utterly fail to understand them. In him we have a poetic embodiment of that spirit of severe subjectivity—of unsparing self-anatomy—which to this day characterises the Christianity of the North of Scotland.

Towards the end of last century a young minister, the Rev. James Macgregor, a native of Perthshire, was sent by the Associate Synod as a missionary to Nova Scotia, to labour among his countrymen. He was full of apostolic zeal and earnestness, and by all legitimate means sought the lasting good of his fellowmen. Finding that no literature of a religious kind circulated among the Gaelic-speaking inhabitants, he composed and published a small collection of hymns, which soon became very popular. They are simple evangelical sermons in smooth-flowing verse, and have been of greater benefit to the multitude than productions of a more pretending order. In recognition of his arduous and successful labours in the colonies, the University of Glasgow conferred on him the degree of D.D. Dr. Macgregor’s poems are still very highly esteemed by his countrymen in the great Dominion of the West.

Next to Dugald Buchanan, the author whose hymns are best and most widely known is the late Peter Grant, a Baptist minister in Strathspey, who published the first edition of his hymns as early as 1813. As he tells in one of his poems, he was deeply impressed with the large extent of practical heathenism among the Highlanders. He complains, as Bishop Carsuel in the sixteenth century did before him, that the Highlanders loved the poetic tales of Fingal and Ossian more than the Gospel, and that they spent all their spare time in the recital of these vain heathen stories. Carsuel gave his own generation a Gaelic

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Liturgy, and Grant gave to his a series of Gospel hymns ; and it need scarcely be asked which of them was the more successful. The hymns immediately became widely popular, and edition after edition was called for ; and such was the hold they got among the people, that they have maintained their popularity to the present day. Grant is not very powerful as a poet, but he is very sweet as a singer. His hymns have about them a sort of holy fragrance that captivates and retains the spirit of devotion. The simplicity of the conception and the naturalness of the style at once affect and enchain the heart. Grant succeeds where a hymnist of more ambition and power would fail. The warmth of his earnest nature is felt in every stanza that he has written. He died some time ago, crowned with years and honours, beloved by all who knew him, mourned by thousands whose souls benefited by the holy strains of his poetry.

Perhaps of all those who have composed Gaelic hymns the best known outside the bounds of the Highlands is the Rev. Dr. John Macdonald, of Ferintosh, otherwise known as "The Apostle of the North." As an orator, preacher, and evangelist, no man of his day in Scotland was the instrument of greater good than he to his countrymen, by whom his memory will be warmly cherished for generations. His poetical works were published in a neat volume in 1846. The longer poems are biographical, the character outlines being the threads along which he conveys, in glowing eloquent language, the lessons of the Cross for daily life. The most popular of his compositions is one entitled "The Christian," which is divided into three parts—*to, at, and beyond Jordan*. He who wrote the following could not recommend Christianity to his fellowmen as a religion of gloom :—

" He often sought for special grace  
At mercy's fountain free,  
*To keep up aye a cheerful face*  
*Hard though the heart might be.*

And by that smile of happiness—  
That fragrance sweet he found—  
He helped a holy cheerfulness  
In all the saints around.

He hated all hypocrisies,  
The silent face of gloom,  
The moaning and the plaintive sighs  
That savour of the tomb.

But the sweet breath of life he knew  
Amidst the tainted air ;  
Heart-brokenness that came to view,  
Would have his tender care."

In much of Dr. Macdonald's poetry we detect the style and the eloquence of the preacher. It is rich with the ripe fruits of Christian experience. He is the Keble of the Highlands. As much of the

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charm of his glowing verse consists in his inimitable phraseology, it is very difficult to present his poems in a poetical dress in English. A distinguished divine who attempted a translation of some of his stanzas succeeded only in producing very painful prose. The following verses describe the Christian on the

## “BANKS OF THE JORDAN.

I hear the floods of Jordan roll,  
 My flesh is seized with dread ;  
 But shame shall ne'er approach my soul,  
 By hope of Heaven led.  
 That hope the Rock of Ages showed  
 To those that went before,  
 Who safely trod the sacred road  
 That leads to Canaan's shore.

My spirit trembles with affright  
 As down to death I go ;  
 Around me glide the shades of night,  
 And weary doubtings grow.  
 Before is an eternity  
 Unreckoned by our years—  
 The shoreless and the boundless sea  
 That wakens shrinking fears.

But on the Christ my eye doth rest—  
 I trust His gracious power ;  
 He succoured me when sore distress'd,  
 He'll save me in that hour.  
 Yea, He a help will yet provide  
 While I am on this shore ;  
 The waters great He will divide  
 Till Jordan I am o'er.”

The beginning of the third part of the poem runs thus :—

“That Christian who once fearful stood  
 Where high the waters swell'd,  
 Lamenting there before the flood  
 Corruption still unquell'd,  
 Has entered now into that rest  
 Whose light aye filled his eye—  
 His spirit, now in glory drest,  
 Surrounds the throne on high.”

A casual sermon by Dr. Maedonald in Harris, on his way to visit the lonely St. Kilda, was the means of converting John Morrison, a blacksmith, subsequently a Free Church catechist. Morrison is one of the most powerful and ingenious of the Celtic bards. Like Maerae of Petty he is much given to the analysis of his Christian experience—the examination of the varied moods and states of soul in which the highly exercised believer finds himself. I do not know in any language a poem like his *Duin' og is seann Duin' agam* in its subtlety of conceptions, its felicity of expression, and its cunning weavings and turnings of verses. Its

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theme is the “holy war” in the Christian soul, which he treats in quite an original fashion. Morrison’s poetry shows that he was profoundly exercised and interested in the spiritual problems and difficulties of the Christian life. Few men ever obtained a deeper insight into the human heart ; and fewer still possessed equal poetic gifts for uttering what they had seen and felt.

The late Rev. Duncan MacLean of Glenorchay, is the last of the great religious bards of the Highlands. Buchanan, Macrae, Morrison, and he are the foremost names on the roll. Grant and Macdonald are more popular than the last three, but their poetry is not of so high an order. A keenly aesthetic spirit pervades all the productions of MacLean. He is exceedingly rich in poetic illustration, and very profound in his lines of thought. The reader discerns at once that he was a man of wide general culture ; and that he brought the fruits of it with him into the sphere of Gaelic religious poetry. He is always in full sympathy with man and the works of creation. But like Morrison and Macrae he is too analytical for the popular taste. His countrymen highly appreciated his eloquent ministrations in their native tongue in the pulpit ; but they do not appear to have understood that there was such a deep mine of fresh and original thought in his poetry. The following lines, in one of the less spiritual of his poems, remind us of Wordsworth, whom MacLean somewhat resembles in his keen sympathies with external nature, and interpretation of its moods :—

“ Loch Tay there I see with a beautiful shade  
On its bosom that’s pure as the breast of a maid—  
Like a child in sweet rest, in its fairy bed laid;  
Touch gently its locks ere its glory may fade.

Glen Dochart, Glen Lochy, are bright to the view ;  
With their corries of green when their dress they renew ;  
With the shadowy nooks where the streamlet fast rushes ;  
Where you hear the gay chorus of robins and thrushes.

All changeless I see them,—hill, river, and road ;  
But where are the people that once there abode ?  
Some rest in their graves ‘neath the slumberous sod,  
But the many are scattered o’er ocean abroad.”

There is a considerable body of religious poetry from the pens of minor bards who published during the last fifty years ; but with the exception of a few of Macdougall’s hymns their works are scarcely known at all among the people. In connection with this subject there is one work that deserves very particular notice—the excellent translation of the Psalms in metre. The solemn lines of the Gaelic Psalm Book, as well as the rich flow of the renderings of the paraphrases, are engraven on the heart of pious Highlanders. These sacred productions, so beautifully and skilfully translated into the native tongue, which is found to be so natural a medium, cast all human efforts into the shade ; and are indeed the despair of the religious bard, who feels that even

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genius of the highest order can compose nothing that can be classed with the Psalms. The Gaelic Psalter came from the hands of men of culture, who were poets themselves of more than mediocre talents, such as the highly accomplished Dr. John Smith of Campbelton. The excellence and naturalness of the metrical translation of the Book of Psalms have no doubt helped to make the Highlanders so utterly indifferent to hymns of human authorship in public worship. Certainly no one has yet been able to produce a collection of Gaelic hymns, although several have been published, which can be spoken of as at all fit for use in the ordinary services of the sanctuary.

It only now remains to make a remark or two on the lines of thought which this brief survey of Gaelic sacred poetry suggests.

First, let us note the fact that, from the days of Patrick and Columba, a stream of Christian sentiment and devotion has flowed down through fourteen centuries to the present day in the Highlands. It may sometimes have been insignificant, or even have disappeared from view; but it has never run dry. Battles, bloodshed, and external changes have no doubt affected its course, and sometimes concealed it from our view; but still it flowed on, whether pouring over the cascade or latent in the bosom of the valleys. And now, undisturbed, we can trace its channel to its source along the sequestered base of the great mountains.

In the second place, it is worthy of remark that the religious poetry of the Highlands has assumed more the form of poems than that of hymns. At the same time, it is thoroughly lyrical—a characteristic of the Celtic mind observable in all its literary productions. In the matter of length, the religious bards followed the example of the secular in their popular songs. And, no doubt, this helps to explain why the native hymns have been but little appreciated, because unsuited for public worship.

And lastly, religious mysticism, to which the Celtic genius naturally is no stranger, can be detected in the works of Maerae, Matheson, and Morrison. Their poetry preserves memorials of a development of the Christian life which has been for more than a century peculiar to the north of Scotland, but which is now in course of extinction under the pressure of an all-assimilative theological education and the highly cosmopolitan tendencies of the present age.

N. MACNEILL.

